

Sithney Stepping Stones Pre School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	102940
Inspection date	07 December 2007
Inspector	Heather Tanswell
Setting Address	Sithney CPS, Crowntown, Helston, Cornwall, TR13 0AE
Telephone number	01326 572910
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Registered person	Sithney Stepping Stones Pre School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional care

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Sithney Stepping Stones Pre-School is a committee run group. It opened in 2000 and operates from the pre-school room in Sithney School, near Crowntown, in Cornwall. A maximum of 15 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09:00 until 11:30 during term times only. All children share access to a secure enclosed play area.

There are currently six children from two to five years on roll. Of these, three children receive funding for nursery education.

The pre-school employs two staff and parents help out on a rota basis. All staff members have early years qualifications to NVQ Level 2 or 3. The setting receives support from an advisory teacher from the Local Authority Family Services.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's are cared for on clean and tidy premises where the standards of hygiene are good. Their health is protected, because staff follow sensible hygiene routines by making sure all areas used by children are clean when children arrive each day, wiping tables routinely during sessions and mopping up spillages straight away. Staff hold recently updated paediatric first aid and implement the settings accident and sickness policies and procedures, which ensures children receive appropriate care if they are taken ill and reduces the risk of cross infection.

Children benefit from eating nutritious snacks consisting of a choice of fresh fruits in sufficient quantities to meet their growing needs. They also learn about healthy eating habits as they talk about their favourite fruits and vegetables at snack times. Children help themselves to drinks of water and/or milk, which ensures they stay well hydrated.

Children take part in daily exercise out in the fresh air of the school playground each day to develop their physical skills and strength as well as feel the positive benefits of being healthy and active. They ride bikes and run about exploring the large open spaces as they play, which helps develop their stamina. However, the lack of suitable large pieces of apparatus means that children do not begin to gain strength and confidence or practise the skills needed to travel around, under, over and through balancing and climbing equipment.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are welcomed into the bright, well-laid out environment with colourful displays of children's work. There is plenty of clear space to ensure children can move around safely, rest, play and learn as staff make good use of their allocated space. The room is well organised to ensure children and staff can safely access and choose from a wide range of age appropriate toys and equipment. This is largely a result of the supportive relationships established with the host school, which ensures children have access to additional space and resources, for example the computer suite, playground and field.

Children stay generally safe and secure because staff implement the detailed health and safety procedures. They carefully monitor access to the building. Main entrance doors and playground gates remain locked once children are present. Staff know what to do in an emergency and make sure children learn to keep themselves safe by routinely practising fire evacuations that have regard for their patterns of attendance. Children are safeguarded from harm because staff implement the setting's child protection policy. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities to promote children's welfare working alongside other agencies.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are settled and happy. They choose from a worthwhile range of activities, enjoying plenty of free play, as well as structured sessions. They move freely around the room between activities, accessing a wide range of resources, such as role-play and small world equipment, art and craft resources, construction materials or sensory play with sand, dough and water.

Staff and parent helpers are deployed well to support their development and children are confident, enthusiastic learners.

Large group activities are well timed to ensure younger children stay actively involved and do not disrupt the enjoyment of older or more able children. All the children are keen to use computers and technology. Younger ones benefit from the help of older more experienced children who help them complete otherwise unattainable tasks. This gives all children a sense of achievement, promotes self-esteem and good relationships.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are happy, take pleasure in coming to the setting and have a positive attitude to learning. They enjoy working together in group activities such as registration. They learn to wait their turn patiently, use numbers and symbols correctly to count from one to 10, and compare how many children and adults there are present, accurately. Children also play independently and happily. They develop their own ideas, and consequently their physical strength as they select which resources they want out and carry the heavy crates carefully into a clear space to play. Children are developing self-control and learn to accept responsibility for their own actions. They share resources, tidy away after themselves and welcome other children into their games and imaginative role-play based on home-life experiences.

Children are involved in a broad range of developmentally appropriate activities, which provide sufficient challenge. They use their senses with glee to explore the effects of blowing through straws into paint and bubble mixture. As the bubbles pile high they link what they see to what they already know calling the conical shape a volcano. Children use symbolic sound effects to express their delight and satisfaction. Staff ask children open ended questions to help make links between what children are doing and planned learning intentions, but this occasionally stops children exploring and experimenting with resources following their own interests. As a result, conversations are sometimes one sided as they are not inspired by children's curiosity. Children make good progress in their understanding of letter sounds as staff model initial sounds as part of everyday routines and activities. Children enjoy listening to stories, take part by answering questions and sometimes 'read' books to one another. Although displays are annotated, storage containers are not labelled to further children's early understanding of the purpose of symbols and writing.

Relationships at all levels are very good. Children appreciate the company of staff and this is reflected in their eagerness to join in with adult led activities. They count accurately in daily routines and use a computer game to match numerals to sets of objects. Staff plan to offer children opportunities to lead their own learning by providing a wide range of attractively presented and accessible resources. Children revel in sensory water and sand play where they explore volume, weight, shape and size as they fill and empty containers. Children build and construct marble runs that help them understand height, direction, speed and use their hand to eye co-ordination to make connections. Children are adept tool users, especially scissors, which they handle safely to cut around pre-determined shapes to make tree decorations. Children develop their creativity through many art and craft activities, including choosing characters from favourite stories to colour and make into Christmas decorations.

Staff understand how young children learn and have a secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage. They work well with parent helpers and reception class staff in school to plan worthwhile experiences for children. They provide a welcoming environment, which reflects the wider

community and most children's backgrounds. They use the information they gather to plan next steps in learning and influence how they interact with children to help them make good progress across all areas of learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children take part in activities that help them feel part of their own and the wider community they live in. They go on outings to local places of interest, such as farms and gardens open to the public and take part in school and village celebrations. Children also learn about how some people from some other cultures and religions celebrate annual festivals such as Diwali. They see photographs and posters of people from around the world, with examples of their writing. Details about individual children's culture are not always valued or used effectively to enrich the overall planning of activities for all children and promote self-esteem. Parents inform staff about their children's individual needs and these are used to influence care routines. However, staff do not always act promptly to address some identified learning difficulties in liaison with other professionals.

Children are confident in the relaxed atmosphere and behave generally well. They settle in very quickly to play and learn the rules of large group activities, such as registration, which ensures these activities, run smoothly. Children are polite and say please and thank you as appropriate, led by staff who are good role models. Staff carefully explain the importance of personal belongings to all the children, which helps them begin to manage their emotional responses and understand the feelings of others. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. They sit on the committee, produce detailed information about the management of the setting, its policies and procedures, and carry out rota duties, all of which helps parents fully understand how the pre-school works. Children's care needs and personal information is fully recorded on enrolment. Regular newsletters, notices, once a term private meetings, and daily informal feedback keeps parents fully up to date with their child's development, progress, targets for learning, and planned activities.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for by suitably qualified staff assisted by rota parent helpers who have completed appropriate checks. Staff update their knowledge and skills by attending short courses and seeking advice from teaching staff within the school and Family Services. The operational plan contains clear, well-written policies and procedures. Ratios are met well at all times, which helps children feel safe, secure, and develop supportive relationships. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management of nursery education are good. Staff use their secure knowledge of the individual children and their records of achievement, to ensure parents stay well informed and children make good progress as they play. The developing close relationships, through joint planning meetings between staff in the setting and teachers responsible for Foundation Stage in school, ensures learning and development is monitored and managed consistently within the school community. These cooperative strategies pro-actively support the transition between home, pre-school and school, which benefits children's sense of belonging, well-being, overall development and learning.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection, the setting agreed to identify fire exits and ensure that the management committee are informed about their roles and responsibilities. Fire exits are now clearly marked to ensure everyone knows the nearest exit to use in an emergency. The recently appointed committee are working closely supported by Family Services to ensure they know what to do to stay up to date with latest regulations and guidance documents.

At the last nursery education inspection, the setting agreed to; use daily routines and planned activities to reinforce learning in mathematics; improve the presentation of books to encourage children to choose for themselves and sit in comfort as they read; ensure that activities are planned and organised to provide regular opportunities for children to write with purpose, and give parents more information about the early learning goals and children's assessment records.

Daily routines are now used well to introduce and reinforce learning in mathematics. A comfortable area has been created in one corner, and reference books are included in displays. However, the boxes of books are full; books cannot easily be seen or taken out. Children now label their work automatically demonstrating that writing has become part of their daily routine. Parents receive information about the early learning goals. Planning is on display and they receive once a term feedback about their child's achievements based on the stepping stones towards these goals.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

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WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- promote children's physical development, strength, agility, confidence to climb, slide, balance, and crawl over, under and through safely on a challenging range of equipment
- plan cultural experiences that celebrate, value and reflect the children who attend.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- use conversation, open-ended questions and thinking out loud to encourage children to reflect on and tell others about what they have been doing, practise thinking and new vocabulary.
- take prompt action to provide support and additional help, in liaison with other professionals, to develop effective strategies to meet particular developmental and/or learning needs.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education (HMI ref no 2599)* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk